

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

October 4, 2001, 9 p.m.-4 p.m.

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICES PORTLAND, OREGON

I. Greetings, Introductions and Review of the Agenda.

The October 4, 2001 Implementation Team meeting, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Jim Ruff of NMFS and facilitated by Donna Silverberg.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed during the call, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from NMFS's Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov.

2. Updates.

A. In-Season Management (TMT). See Agenda Item 4, below.

B. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). No ISAB update was presented at today's meeting.

C. Water Quality Team (WQT). WQT co-chair Mark Schneider reported that the next WQT meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday; at that meeting, the group will be talking about the BiOp-mandated review of the fixed monitoring station array, specifically, Joe Carroll's analysis of the representativeness of the Camas/Washougal station. We will be discussing the technical issues associated with that analysis and seeking the WQT's input on those issues, Schneider said, and on the adequacy of the current fixed monitoring station array. Schneider added that the Transboundary Gas Group is scheduled to meet on October 23 - 24 in Castlegar, British Columbia; he distributed the agenda for that two-day meeting.

Schneider also distributed Enclosure E, an issue paper he has developed titled “Water Quality and the Council Provincial Review Process.” Schneider said a number of entities have reviewed this paper to date, including the Power Planning Council itself. I’ll be discussing the paper with the Council staff next week, he said; essentially, what I’m proposing in this paper is that water quality should be a checkpoint very early on in any habitat improvement work that is undertaken. Schneider asked the IT membership to review this paper and provide any comments they may have directly to him.

D. System Configuration Team (SCT). No SCT update was presented at today’s meeting.

E. TMDL Update. No TMDL update was presented at today’s meeting.

3. Five-Year Implementation Plan Update.

BPA’s Katherine Cheney said the postponement of yesterday’s Regional Executives meeting makes this agenda item somewhat moot; the plan was for the Executives to discuss and make recommendations on the Five-Year Plan at that meeting, which will now take place on October 19. Cheney said the comment period on the draft five-year plan has now closed; a substantial number of comments were received, and the action agencies are in the process of summarizing them. She added that there was a Federal Caucus meeting last Tuesday to discuss Implementation Plan-related budgetary matters, in particular, what was spent to implement the BiOp in FY’01 and what will be spent in FY’02.

Cheney noted that the annual Implementation Plan will be made available to the IT soon, possibly in time for presentation at the November 1 IT meeting.

4. TMT Year-End Reports to IT.

Margaret Filardo began this portion of the agenda with a presentation titled “2001 Juvenile Salmon Migration – Preliminary Analysis.” Filardo worked from a series of overheads, copies of which are available as Enclosure F. Please refer to this document for details of Filardo’s presentation.

Filardo touched on the physical characteristics of the 2001 migration season, spring and summer flow and spill at Lower Granite and McNary Dams, historic (1995-2001) spring and summer flows in the Snake and Lower Columbia Rivers, spill and water temperature information for various sites in the basin, migration characteristics, 2001 passage indices vs. flow at various dams, spring and summer migration timing data, chinook and steelhead travel time information, spill timing data, the estimated effects of the 2001 spill program on survival, 2001 juvenile survival estimates for the Snake, Mid- and Lower Columbia Rivers, historic (1995-2001) survival estimates (very poor in 2001 compared to the previous five years, particularly for steelhead), Priest Rapids flow and stranding information, Hanford Reach loss estimates (1.6 million+ in 2001, compared to only 72,362 last year), and chum redd data for the Ives/Pierce Island area.

Filardo finished her presentation with the following summary:

- Near-record low runoff volume, energy regulation, volatile wholesale power markets and BPA energy and financial emergencies combined to produce poor migration conditions in 2001.
- Biological Opinion flow targets were never met.
- Spill was eliminated from Snake projects and implemented too late in the spring and summer migration in the Lower Columbia.
- Most Snake River migrants were transported.
- Run timing was affected with the runs beginning later and with a shorter duration of passage.
- Power peaking in the Mid-Columbia likely exacerbated the effects of the low flow year.
- Travel times in 2001 were some of the slowest observed in the historic record.
- River management in the fall of 2000 limited access to chum spawning areas and the cessation of protection flows occurred too early during emergence in the spring. Chum likely suffered losses.
- River conditions produced the poorest survival estimates since survival has been estimated using PIT tags.

Bill Tweit observed that one of the few bright spots in this year's fish passage season is the information collected about the flow/travel time relationship, and the biological importance of providing BiOp flow levels. Filardo noted that, in general, the spill that was provided in 2001 came too late, and provided protection only to the latter part of each run-at-large. Filardo added that overall juvenile survival from Lower Granite to Bonneville was estimated to be only 30% for chinook and 4% for steelhead in 2001, compared to 49% and 39%, respectively, in 2000. Tweit said he is particularly distressed by these steelhead survival numbers; other participants, however, noted that, given the realities of this extremely poor water year, it was inevitable that one species or another would experience a serious detrimental impact. If it wasn't steelhead, said one, it would have been yearling or subyearling chinook.

Filardo emphasized that this presentation is based on preliminary numbers; the Fish Passage Center will continue to refine these results and estimates this fall, and will include final figures in its annual report.

Next, Cindy Henriksen distributed Enclosures C and D, answers to some of the year-end review questions developed by the IT and a series of graphs showing 2001 outflow and reservoir elevation information for Libby, Hungry Horse, Albeni Falls, Grand Coulee, Dworshak, Priest Rapids, Lower Granite and McNary Dams, respectively. She spent a few minutes going through this information; please refer to Enclosures C and D for details of her presentation.

The bottom line, said Henriksen, is that the spring seasonal average flow was only 123.9 Kcfs at McNary, 47.5 Kcfs at Lower Granite and 76.7 Kcfs at Priest Rapids; peak flows at these projects were only about 165 Kcfs, 95 Kcfs and 129 Kcfs, respectively. The summer seasonal average flow

was 90.9 Kcfs at McNary and 25.4 Kcfs at Lower Granite. Henriksen also provided a comparison of the Corps' MASS-1 temperature model outputs and actual water temperatures observed in the forebay and tailrace at Lower Granite; this information is available via the Corps' Internet homepage.

The overall lesson learned in 2001? Ruff said. As Donna stated last meeting, low flows are bad for fish – that observation was only validated by these presentations.

And what does the IT want to do with this information? Silverberg asked. The Hydro Work Group is still working on its year-end report for the Federal Caucus, Ruff replied; any additional thoughts or comments the IT membership would like to offer will be reflected in the Hydro Work group's report. He asked that any additional comments be provided to him as soon as possible; the goal is to complete the year-end review within the next three weeks or so. Ruff said he will try to make a presentation on the year-end report at the November IT meeting, if it is completed, and will do his best to have copies of the report itself available at that time.

Filardo then distributed a memo, dated October 4, on the topic of "Mid-Columbia Tagging for 2002." She spent a few minutes going through the planned number of tagged fish of each species for 2002, comparing those numbers to the numbers tagged in 2001. The bottom line, said Filardo, is that there are several new groups proposed for tagging in 2002; overall, substantial numbers of tagged fish will be released in the Mid-Columbia in 2002. These releases, in the Fish Passage Center's estimation, will meet the region's needs for in-season management of these chinook and steelhead species. There may, however, be a need to mark additional groups of subyearling fall chinook if there is a desire to develop juvenile survival estimates for the Lower Columbia, or to compile SAR and/or passage route data, Filardo said.

It was agreed that the IT will discuss this topic further at the group's November meeting, specifically, the question of whether or not the IT should write a letter to the Council endorsing the tagging of additional subyearling fall chinook in 2002. At Tony Nigro's suggestion, Filardo said she will get the views of the Comparative Survival Study (CSS) group on this subject, and will share them with the IT prior to the November IT meeting.

5. Discussion of Suggestions for Changes to Existing Implementation Processes and Procedures.

Silverberg reminded the group that consensus was reached at the September IT meeting that this is a very important effort to undertake. It was agreed that NMFS would fax the most recent version of the IT Guidelines for IT review; however, due to technical difficulties, this has not yet taken place. John Palensky distributed copies of the Guidelines at today's meeting.

At Silverberg's suggestion, it was agreed to make this topic Item 1 on the November 1 IT agenda. Silverberg added that she has contacted Idaho, Montana and various tribal entities directly; at

this point, she said, none of these groups is boycotting the IT, but various tribes said there simply aren't any burning issues the tribes want to address at IT. Silverberg said Montana's position is that they will continue to participate as issues of interest arise in the future. Idaho has not returned my telephone calls, Silverberg said.

6. Comments on August and September IT Meetings.

No comments were offered on the minutes at today's meeting; Ruff asked that any comments on the August or September IT meeting minutes be provided to him as soon as possible.

7. Next IT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for Thursday, November 1. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA writer-editor pool.